

Headache Osco needs aspirin dealing with Milwaukee - Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - March 31, 1995 - page 1

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It's fortunate Osco Drug carries aspirin. The company's

executives might need some after their first forays into the Milwaukee-area real estate market.

Osco wants to open 35 stores in the area over the next five years. But a string of problems may lead the company to reconsider those plans, said Todd Robert Murphy, whose public relations agency works for Osco.

Since 1994, when Osco announced it would enter Milwaukee, the company has run into trouble at:

{ } 2607 N. Downer Ave., where plans to lease space now being used for a Sentry Foods store drew opposition. Some neighborhood residents said Osco would attract too much traffic, so the company backed away from the site.

{ } West Mitchell and South 13th Streets, where the Common Council voted, 9 to 7, earlier this week to deny Osco a liquor license for a store being built there.

{ } 9220 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis, where some residents oppose Osco's liquor license application. Osco bought the former Town & Country Super Market and will renovate it into a store.

Most of Osco's 530 stores nationwide sell liquor, Murphy said, with liquor typically accounting for 10% of sales.

Osco executives are concerned about the controversies, Murphy said.

"The danger . . . is this could be a domino effect," Murphy said.

What baffles Osco executives, Murphy said, is they think they've done everything right. The Mitchell Street store would not have sold alcohol in packages that troublemakers tend to favor, such as 40-ounce bottles of beer. That helped draw support for Osco from groups like the 16th Street Community Health Center.

In West Allis, opposition to the license has come from St. Aloysius Congregation. But Osco has offered to work with the parish school to prevent alcohol sales to its students, Murphy said. He also said an opposition leader owns a building that houses a liquor store.

The Downer Avenue store would not have sold liquor because the building doesn't have enough space, Murphy said. Yet, liquor sales became an issue.

Osco executives will continue to work with community leaders to overcome the opposition, Murphy said. The decision to back away from the Downer Avenue site is part of that campaign, he said.

"What's the net gain in playing hardball? There will be other stores," Murphy said.

Midwest Express may fly to Oak Creek: Midwest Express Airlines Inc. may move its corporate offices.

Midwest, which uses 40,000 square feet at 4915 S. Howell Ave., is looking at 27 acres on the east side of South Howell Avenue, just south of West Oak Street, said Paul Milewski, Oak Creek community development director. The site is north of a freight terminal being developed by Roadway Express Inc.

"It looks like a good possibility," said Milewski. He said reports of Midwest Express' interest in the site have come from sources other than the airline itself.

Midwest spokeswoman Kim Roberts would only confirm the company has ruled out the possibility of building the offices on land owned by Milwaukee County.

That site is north of East Layton Avenue and overlooks Mitchell International Airport. The land lies in a Federal Aviation Administration no-build zone, and could be used for offices only if a general aviation runway was decommissioned, said Supervisor Daniel Cupertino.

Planet Video continues expansion: Planet Video Inc., a West Allis-based video rental chain, just bought a Glendale site for its newest store, President Victor Seyedin said.

The building that houses a former Sir Waxer outlet, 5520 N. Port Washington Road, will be razed, with Planet Video opening its store by October, Seyedin said.

The Glendale store will be Planet Video's ninth location since it began operations in April 1994, Seyedin said. The company plans to open three to four more stores by the end of 1995.

Planet Video stores range from 7,300 to 14,000 square feet.

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